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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 0260
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE IMMEDIATE 0684
RHEHOND/DIR ONDCP WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 001426

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/26/2017
TAGS: KCRM PGOV PREL SNAR AF
SUBJECT: URUZGAN ERADICATION OFF TO ROCKY START; DUTCH MAY
RAISE AT SENIOR LEVELS

REF: KABUL 1219

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C/NF) Summary: The Dutch may use the NATO informal ministerial in Oslo or other high-level opportunities to raise concern about Afghan-led poppy eradication efforts in Uruzgan province which the Dutch fear will jeopardize the security of their PRT operations and possibly the mandate of their troops. Ambassador Wood has emphasized our position that while eradication should focus on agreed target areas first, we do not want to rule out GOA eradication efforts anywhere in the second largest poppy producing province in Afghanistan. With the Afghans pressing to expand into areas the Dutch clearly do not want them to enter, some tough moments lie ahead. End Summary.

¶2. (C/NF) The USG-funded Afghan Eradication Force (AEF) started eradicating poppy in Uruzgan province on April 26. The operation started badly when the AEF, under Afghan lead, started working east of the area that the Dutch PRT had previously identified for AEF operations. Embassy officers traveling with the AEF convoy immediately stopped activity when a GPS check showed that the operation was outside the target area (approximately 5 km east of the green zone), and we estimate that the AEF eradicated less than one hectare of poppy. The AEF returned to their forward operating base and will resume operations on April 27.

¶3. (C/NF) Dutch response to the mishap was immediate. The Dutch Charge registered his strong objection to DCM. PRT officials have expressed anger that on the very first day, in the first hour of operations, there has already been a breach of the target area. The Dutch political counselor informed emboff that some PRT officials are accusing us of deliberately misleading them and encouraging out-of-area operations. We have refuted this false charge.

AFGHANS SEEK TO EXPAND ERADICATION TO THE EAST

¶4. (C/NF) The poor start exacerbates tensions with the Dutch over eradication activities, with Dutch diplomatic and military contacts again warning us today, April 26, that poorly coordinated eradication in Uruzgan may jeopardize their Government's mandate renewal for Afghanistan operations. We anticipate that this tension will only increase later in the day when Deputy Interior Minister Daud, who is in Uruzgan, makes an expected appeal to PRT officials to expand the target area further to the east (this is probably for tribal political reasons that we are still trying to ascertain and help manage). The Dutch have told us that this is unacceptable and want us to join in opposition to the request.

¶4. (C/NF) We have long maintained to the Dutch that we would keep the AEF within the agreed target area--as we did today--but we also warned them that we may seek to expand the target's boundaries. Ambassador Wood has stressed our position that we do not want to prevent the Afghans from eradicating poppy, regardless of its location. In deference to the PRT's security concerns about expanding the target area, we are telling the Ministry of Interior that they first must finish operations within the agreed zone before looking to venture farther to the east. We have passed this same line to Dutch contacts.

¶5. (C/NF) COMMENT: We know the Dutch Embassy has

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conveyed today's events to The Hague, and we believe that the Dutch Foreign Minister may use the occasion of the Oslo meetings to address the issue with the Secretary. While we believe that the Dutch PRT's

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sensitivity about eradication is overblown, we cannot from here assess how this activity will affect the Netherlands' mandate renewal. In the face of a threat of what the Dutch are calling a "political veto" on eradication operations in Uruzgan, we are working to broker renewed consensus among the Dutch and the Afghans. END COMMENT.

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